

# Health Education, Physical Education, and Recess— Elementary

COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION



**The purpose of these essential standards is to provide educators with a prioritized list of standards to focus on during COVID-19.**

While all standards have value, COVID-19 may limit instructional hours. The essential standards are intended to help teachers identify which standards to focus on. While these are the essential standards, if there is more instructional time, the recommendation is to extend the instructional focus to all standards.

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# COVID-19 Considerations for Health Education, Physical Education, and Recess in Elementary Settings

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## Health Education

Health education provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to practice healthy behaviors and teaches students how to recognize the influence of responsible decision-making on quality of life. By providing effective health education programming, schools can help students develop health literacy skills, so they are able to access information, resources, and services in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The development of these skills by students is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Below are additional precautions and considerations for the instructional strategies and physical environment for health education.**

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

A skills-based approach is a best practice for delivering high-quality health education.

The six strands in health education core standards are:

1. Health Foundations and Protective Factors
2. Mental and Emotional Health
3. Safety and Disease Prevention
4. Substance Abuse Prevention
5. Nutrition
6. Human Development

All six key health education strands are important, but teachers should consider focusing on certain skills and content that are more relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Strands 1-3 focus on decision making, mental health, and disease prevention, all which can help students cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and teach the skills to make more informed health decisions. Please keep in mind the standards vertically align with the next grade. Each standard is important, beginning in kindergarten, and should be taught to students. By utilizing the [Health Education Core Guides](#), educators can package related grade-level standards together creating instruction to cover more than one standard. K-6 standards can also be integrated with other core subjects (e.g., literacy, science, mathematics).

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Follow all state guidelines for classrooms regarding physical distancing, healthy hygiene habits (including face coverings), and sanitation. See [State Public Health Order](#)
- In the classroom, space desks or tables as much as possible.
- Turn desks or tables to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), have students sit on only one side of tables, or create other barrier methods.
- Keep each student's belongings in a separate, safe and clean space such as individually labeled cubbies, lockers, or areas. Consider purchasing baskets to hold individual student belongings if previously mentioned spaces are not available.
- Ensure adequate supplies for all students to eliminate sharing of high-touch materials such as textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, etc. to the extent possible. Clean and disinfect supplies after student use and between class periods.

## Physical Education

Physical education provides students with a planned, sequential, standards-based program designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, teamwork, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. The skills and knowledge gained by students through physical education are especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SHAPE America and CDC [recommend](#) that all students participate in daily physical education in grades K-12, with instruction periods totaling 150 minutes per week in elementary school and 225 minutes per week in middle school and high school.

**Below are additional precautions and considerations for the instructional strategies, physical environment, personal hygiene, and equipment safety sanitation for physical education.**

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Continue to address all five strands from the Utah Core Standards for Physical Education (K-12) by selecting standards that require little or no use of shared equipment by students. Educators may need to shift the focus of their curriculum to Strand 3 (health-enhancing fitness), Strand 4 (personal and social responsibility) and Strand 5 (value of physical activity) and incorporate activities for Strand 1 (motor skills and movement patterns) and Strand 2 (movement concepts) that are safe and appropriate. NOTE: In many situations, it will not be possible to address all Grade-Level Standards due to the constraints of physical distancing.
- Teachers may need a microphone and speaker when delivering instruction to students. The use of face coverings and the need for students to spread out to accommodate physical distancing may make it more difficult for teacher instructions to be heard.
- Focus more on individual pursuits or skills rather than traditional team sports or activities (e.g., dance and rhythms, exercises without equipment, yoga, fitness, mindfulness, outdoor pursuits, track and field, racket sports, and target games).
- Use games and activities that require no physical contact and do not require students to be in close physical proximity to each other.
- Include opportunities for student choice and incorporate student-suggested activities when appropriate.
- Ensure lessons are planned around the available space for instruction.

### Physical Education Distance Learning Supplement

During distance learning, educators should continue to address all five strands for K-12 Physical Education by selecting associated standards that require little or no use of shared equipment by students. Educators may need to shift the focus of their curriculum to Strand 3 (health-enhancing fitness), Strand 4 (personal and social responsibility) and Strand 5 (value of physical activity) and incorporate activities for Strand 1 (motor skills and movement patterns) and Strand 2 (movement concepts) that are safe and appropriate. NOTE: In some situations, it may not be possible to address all Grade-Level Standards due to the constraints of distance learning.

Below are recommendations for what Standards should be prioritized specifically while students are at home. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide some specific examples that hopefully serve as a catalyst for educators to generate additional ideas.

*Grades K-2*

| <b>Strand</b>                             | <b>Example standard</b>  | <b>Example Activity Ideas/Strategies</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Motor Skills & Movement Patterns       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locomotor</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Underhand throw</li> <li>• Catching</li> <li>• Dribbling with hands</li> <li>• Dribbling with feet</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tossing to self</li> <li>• Target games</li> <li>• Striking activities (e.g., racquets, paddles)</li> <li>• Creative movement</li> <li>• Movement stories, teachers read a story as students act it out</li> <li>• Kicking</li> </ul>                                 |
| 2. Movement Concepts                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Pathways, shapes, levels</li> <li>• Speed, direction force</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students create an obstacle course in their home or with sidewalk chalk, take pictures and share with the class</li> <li>• Have students demonstrate personal and general space</li> </ul>   |
| 3. Health-Enhancing Fitness               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical activity knowledge</li> <li>• Fitness knowledge</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate mindfulness (Try these Skills Posters for Grades K-5)</li> <li>• Sharing physical activity calendars for students to use at home</li> <li>• Have students identify healthy and unhealthy foods in their home</li> <li>• Mindfulness activities</li> </ul> |
| 4. Responsible Personal & Social Behavior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules and etiquette</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students suggest classroom norms and contribute to class decisions</li> </ul>  |
| 5. Value of Physical Activity             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Self-expression &amp; enjoyment</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate check-ins into the daily routine</li> <li>• Have students share their perceived difficulty of new activities</li> <li>• Have students share their perceived enjoyment for activities</li> </ul>   |

Grades 3-5

| Strand                                    | Example standard   | Example Activity Ideas/Strategies  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Motor Skills & Movement Patterns       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locomotor</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Underhand throw</li> <li>• Catching</li> <li>• Dribble with hands</li> <li>• Dribble with feet</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping and landing</li> <li>• Catching and tossing challenges</li> <li>• Striking Activities</li> <li>• Kicking</li> <li>• Dribbling</li> <li>• Activities that include other family members or siblings at home</li> </ul>  |
| 2. Movement Concepts                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Pathways, shapes, levels</li> <li>• Speed direction, force</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students create an obstacle course in their home or with sidewalk chalk, take pictures and share with the class</li> <li>• Have students create their own pathways and travel through them while dribbling</li> </ul>  |
| 3. Health-Enhancing Fitness               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness knowledge</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share physical activity calendars for students to use at home</li> <li>• Create a class list of activities students can do outside of school</li> <li>• Create a fitness or dance routine</li> <li>• Stretching, yoga</li> <li>• Scavenger hunts</li> <li>• Jumping rope</li> <li>• Mindfulness activities</li> </ul> |
| 4. Responsible Personal & Social Behavior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with others</li> <li>• Rules and etiquette</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students explain the importance of the new routines and rules</li> <li>• Have students suggest classroom norms and contribute to class decisions</li> </ul>  |
| 5. Value of Physical Activity             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Self-expression and enjoyment</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion around the benefits of physical activity especially related to improving mood</li> <li>• Self-reflection assignments/assessments</li> </ul>   |

Grade 6

| Strand                                    | Example standard  | Example Activity Ideas/Strategies   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Motor Skills & Movement Patterns       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance &amp; rhythms</li> <li>• Net/wall games</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a fitness or dance routine representing your feelings about distance learning</li> <li>• Cycling</li> <li>• Badminton, tennis, handball or other rackets and balls students might have available</li> </ul>   |
| 2. Movement Concepts                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Direction</li> <li>• Transitions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition from offense to defense</li> <li>• Recognize open space and attempt to strike an object into that space.</li> <li>• Change force application during a dance or gymnastic activity</li> <li>• Link skills together</li> <li>• Perform skills in an increasingly complex environment</li> <li>• Establish a ready position for skill performance</li> <li>• Strike or throw a ball to a specific target</li> <li>• Create and perform a variety of activities that combine traveling, rolling, balancing, and weight transfer into a smooth-flowing sequence</li> </ul> |
| 3. Health-Enhancing Fitness               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical activity knowledge</li> <li>• Engages in physical activity</li> <li>• Stress management</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-regulation activities</li> <li>• Share ideas for at-home physical activity</li> <li>• Stretching, yoga, Pilates</li> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Body weight strength activities (students can create their own weights using milk/water jugs)</li> <li>• Physical activity log</li> <li>• Outdoor pursuits</li> <li>• Creating fitness plans</li> <li>• Activity swap — students create activities/challenges and share with each other</li> <li>• Juggling</li> <li>• Fitness stations</li> </ul>  |
| 4. Responsible Personal & Social Behavior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal responsibility</li> <li>• Accepting feedback</li> <li>• Working with others</li> <li>• Rules and etiquette</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reflection assignments/assessments</li> <li>• Scavenger hunts</li> <li>• Have students suggest classroom norms and contribute to class decisions</li> </ul>   |
| 5. Value of Physical Activity             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Self-expression and enjoyment</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reflection assignments/assessments</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion around the benefits of physical activity especially related to improving mood</li> <li>• Physical Activity Chart</li> </ul>   |

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Select a location for physical education instruction where students and staff can respect physical distancing guidelines and remain 6 feet apart.
- Evaluate available outdoor spaces on school property. When possible, use outdoor spaces for physical education instruction.
- Classes should not be combined, and class size should not be increased for physical education instruction. More space for instruction may be required for physical education class due to increased respiration of students when participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
- If students are required to remain in the same classroom for all instructional periods throughout the day, have physical education teachers rotate through classrooms to deliver instruction.
- If using the gymnasium or multipurpose room for instruction, keep the doors and windows open if possible, to maximize circulation and air flow to accommodate for increased respiration by students while participating in physical activity.
- Consider postponing or modifying units of instruction that take place in school weight rooms or swimming pools and/or consult local community COVID-19 guidelines on the use of these type of facilities.
- Coordinate with classroom teachers on a plan for transporting students from the classroom to the physical education space (e.g., gymnasium, outdoors, multipurpose room). Give students guidance on how to safely transition between classrooms while still maintaining physical distancing. Plan time to practice these transitions with students.
- Provide visual guides and signs on floors and in hallways to help facilitate physical distancing as students and staff move from classroom to classroom. Ensure that students and staff with disabilities have proper accommodations and guidance to follow these cues.
- Plan to incorporate marked off areas (e.g., poly spots, cones, visual aids, signs) to ensure physical distancing among students and reduce cross contamination. Sanitize all equipment between class periods.
- Consult local health department on proper sanitation procedures for cleaning high-touch surfaces in your facility (e.g., doorknobs, tables, handles). Surfaces like walls and floors do not require additional sanitation and will only require standard cleaning. Ensure that cleaners and disinfectants are stored properly and out of reach of students. See [CDC guidance](#) for more resources.
- Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized frequently or deemed out of service. Encourage students and staff to use individual water bottles.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Have students and staff wash or sanitize hands as they enter and exit the class. Teach students proper hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and physical distancing guidelines. The CDC downloadable resources on [handwashing](#) may assist as cues and reminders.
- Face coverings should be worn by staff and students inside the building and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Teachers who provide instruction to English-language learners or students with hearing impairments may need to make modifications, such as wearing a clear face covering.
- Face coverings are not recommended for anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance.
- Face coverings do not need to be worn during outdoor recess, physical education class, or other school-sponsored activities where the individual cannot reasonably participate while wearing a face covering. [See Appendix C: Face Covering Exceptions in K-12](#)
- Use CDC guidance may help teach students how to properly [wear and remove face coverings](#) and why they are important for protecting students and staff from the spread of COVID-19.
- Recognize and address the stigma that may occur as a result of COVID-19 when students cough or sneeze or are unable to wear face coverings due to underlying conditions.

## EQUIPMENT AND SANITATION

- Consult with the local health department on proper physical education equipment sanitation procedures. See [CDC guidance](#) for additional resources as needed.
- Inventory physical education equipment at the school to identify which pieces of equipment can be easily and effectively sanitized. Cloth or porous materials are more difficult to properly sanitize than vinyl or plastic materials.
- Limit the use of physical education equipment and eliminate the use of equipment that would be passed between or shared by multiple students throughout a class period.
- For equipment that will be touched or handled by students, assign each student their own piece of equipment for that class period. Properly clean and disinfect equipment between classes. If there is not equitable access to equipment for all students or if equipment cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected between classes, avoid the use of equipment altogether.
- Equipment that will be touched or handled by students should be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected with an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) that is effective for COVID-19 and is safe for that piece of equipment (check manufacturer recommendations). Disinfectants should only be used on materials that students are not likely to put in their mouths.
- Staff should be properly trained on how to safely apply disinfectant and have access to the appropriate personal protective equipment needed. Ensure sufficient ventilation when applying disinfectants. Follow the directions listed on the disinfectant label. Make

sure disinfectants are stored appropriately and out of reach of students. Always consult with the local health department before creating a plan for sanitizing equipment.

- Some materials (porous or cloth material) cannot be effectively cleaned and should be removed from instructional areas (e.g., area rugs, pillows, cushions).
- Keep each student's belongings in a separate, safe and clean space such as individually labeled cubbies, lockers, or areas. Consider purchasing baskets to hold individual student belongings if previously mentioned spaces are not available.

## Recess

[Recess](#) should not be eliminated if schools are operating under a model of in-school instruction with physical distancing. Recess helps students achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day for children and adolescents, which can improve strength and endurance, enhance academic achievement, and increase self-esteem. Recess also helps students practice social skills such as cooperation, following rules, problem-solving, negotiation, sharing, and communication. Opportunities for free play, to engage in physical activity, and to practice social skills are especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Below are additional precautions to consider for recess.**

- Provide recess or free time to engage in safe physical activity daily for all K-12 students whenever possible. Recess should provide opportunities for all students to be active and allow for free choice by students.
- Do not withhold recess as punishment for a student.
- Evaluate available indoor and outdoor spaces on school property that can be used for recess. Identify multiple areas where recess can be held for different cohorts of students to minimize crowding. Whenever possible, use outdoor spaces for recess.
- If using indoor spaces for recess, keep the doors and windows open to maximize circulation and air flow to accommodate for increased respiration by students while participating in physical activity.
- Develop a plan for transporting students from the classroom to the designated recess area. Give students guidance on how to safely transition between areas while still maintaining physical distancing. Plan time to practice these transitions with students.
- Provide adequate adult supervision for recess.
- Have students and staff wash or sanitize hands before and after recess. Use CDC downloadable resources on [handwashing](#) as visual cues and reminders.
- Significantly limit or eliminate the use of playground equipment or play structures. If playground equipment is used, it requires normal, routine cleaning. Consult with the local health department on playground and recess play equipment sanitation procedures. See [CDC guidance](#) for additional resources as needed.
- Use painted play spaces or create play areas with stencils or cones to designate zones to help students identify how to safely comply with physical distancing guidelines and to provide sufficient opportunities for free choice during recess.
- Encourage recess games and activities that do not require physical contact or for students to be in close physical proximity with each other.

- Limit the use of recess play equipment (e.g., balls, frisbees) and eliminate the use of equipment that would be passed between or shared by multiple students.
- If using play equipment, keep extra materials available in case a piece of equipment becomes dirty or unsanitary during an activity.
- Play equipment that will be touched or handled by students should be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected with an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) that is effective against COVID-19 and is safe for that piece of equipment. Disinfectants should only be used on materials that students are not likely to put in their mouths.